Relationship between the Early Bronze Culture of the Korean Peninsula and the Early Yayoi Culture: From the Viewpoints of Tottaimon Pottery and Settlements

Yi Hyungwon

This article examines the relationship between the bronze culture of the Korean Peninsula and the early Yayoi culture from the viewpoints of tottaimon pottery (clay band pottery) and settlements.

A review and examination of recently excavated materials reveals a high possibility that tottaimon pottery of the Korean Peninsula may have continuously existed from the Initial Bronze Age to the latter half (end) of the Early Bronze Age. As a result, the age gap of tottaimon pottery between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Islands has almost disappeared. Therefore, the tottaimon pottery culture should be examined as the culture of the whole East Asia, and cultures related to tottaimon pottery should be assumed to have spread in a wide range from the Chinese Northeast region to the Korean Peninsula (the Northwest Korea, Northeast Korea, and Southern region) and the Japanese Islands.

Among the elements composing a settlement, constructions on the ground have gotten little attention thus far. However, a study on those constructions such as buildings with munamochi-bashira (roof supporting pillars), storage holes, and wells in the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Islands indicates a close connection between the Korean bronze culture and the Yayoi culture.

With regard to the structure of settlements, another study was conducted to examine common and different points of the Manggok-ri site in the southern Korean Peninsula and the Etsuji site in the northern Kyusyu Island. The study gave special attention to the meaning of northern Kyushu-style tottaimon pottery unearthed at the Manggok-ri site. The research results reveal that social changes were one of reasons why groups of large-scale storage holes appeared in the middle bronze culture. Exploring reasons why they appeared a little later in the early Yayoi culture, the results also suggest that it was because the early immigrant groups who spread rice cultivation were very small in number and only reached lower socioeconomic levels or status. For the same reason, there were neither huge memorials such as dolmens and sectional graves nor bronze objects as symbols of power and authority of leaders in the Initial Yayoi period. These results are also consistent with other research results that the immigration was attributed to changes in the situation of chiefdom societies and the deterioration of the climate and environment in the Korean Peninsula.

Key words: tottaimon pottery (clay band pottery), Settlements, Bronze Age, Yayoi period, Overseas immigrants, Chinese and Korean immigrants